

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

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As everywhere, education in the Caucasus aimed at developing those traits in the children which were part of the national cultural ideal. In the whole N. Caucasus and in Georgia, great stress was laid on the development of character (courage, stamina, loyalty, modesty, but also self-assertion and vengeance) and on good manners (especially in the N. W. Caucasus there was a complex and rigid code of behavior). The education consisted further in instruction in the use of arms and in horsemanship. Among the mountaineers it had definite Spartan characteristics, e. g. the Khevsur put burning wicks or glowing coals on the hands of their children to harden them against pain and to test their stamina. Stress was also laid on the ability to express oneself well and to the point, and to make speeches at various occasions. In Georgia, among the higher classes, there was a native tradition of training in the arts and sciences, the centers of which originally were the monasteries. In the N. Caucasus such a tradition did not exist, though there were Moslem schools (medrese) giving instruction in religion and some arithmetic, and also Russian schools, founded after the subjugation. Before the revolution, the higher classes sent their children to Russian cultural centers to complete their education. Many chose a

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indeed love my mother; but I must also punish the person who suggested ⁸⁸⁸ surrender. Take my mother therefore, and punish her, punish her with one ⁵⁹³ stroke and give me the remaining 39." This is a story every North Caucasian Mohammedan has heard again and again.

§ 7. EDUCATION

With the coming of Mohammedanism the method of education in the Caucasus was revolutionized. In many places throughout North Caucasus and especially in Daghestan, a new educator was introduced, the mullah. Till then, the home was the only "school" and the parents (or foster-parents) the only educators.⁸⁰ The subject matter of these Mohammedan schools⁸¹ was, as usual, limited to the study of Arabic and the Koran and Islamic tradition, at times taught by very poorly educated mullahs.⁸²

The second important innovation came with the Russians,⁸³ but especially with the Soviets. Only the Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaijani had an alphabet in pre-Soviet times.⁸⁴ The Soviets immediately realized the necessity of an alphabet for each language, without which the spread of Marxism would be impossible. In 1928 about 40 per cent of the Chechens received formal schooling, while only a very few isolated mountain villages had no school at all.⁸⁵ In the mountain of Daghestan the illiteracy is still very great. According to statistics of 1926 only about 10 per cent of the men and 1 per cent of the women can read. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that progress has been made among these mountain peoples too.⁸⁶ Today there are enough Lesghians who are able to read to make Russian, Kumykian, Lak, and Avarian newspapers possible.⁸⁷ The Lesghian children receive instructions in their mother-tongue only in the first two years at school; after that they must learn either Kumykian or Russian. In secondary schools both languages are obligatory.⁸⁸

As for home education, a few general remarks will suffice. The education of little children and of all unmarried girls is the task of the mother; the education of the boys is the task of the father.⁸⁹ The little children are told to behave

⁸⁰ Cf. K. N. Rossikov, "Poždka v Cečnju i Nagornyj Dagestan," ZKO, XIII (1884), p. 249.

⁸¹ A. Zacharov, "Narodnoe obučenie u Zakavkazskich Tatar," SMOMPK, IX (1890), No. 2, pp. 7—11; Mir-Galim-bek Vezirov, "O Tatarskich školach," SMOMPK, IX (1890), No. 2, pp. 1—6; A. Omarov, "Vospominanija mutaallima," SSKG, I, pp. 13—20; II, pp. 46—70.

⁸² Cf. Halil Beg Musayassul for a description of his schooling in *Das Land der letzten Ritter*, pp. 52—56.

⁸³ "O rasprostraneni gramotnosti meždu gorcami," SSKG, III (1870), pp. 1—30. The main object of pre-Soviet education was to teach a sufficient number of natives the Russian language.

⁸⁴ Of course some attempts had been made before the Revolution. Fifteen years after the Revolution all North Caucasians had a written language. The Latin script was used as foundation for the Cherkess, Abaz, Chechen, Karachai, Balkarian, Avar, Dargwa, Kurin, Lak, Tabassaran, Kumykian, Nogai, and Tat languages. Cf. G. P. Serdjuchenko, "Jazyki Severnogo Kavkaza i Dagestana," *Sbornik lingvističeskich issledovanij*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1935, p. 7.

⁸⁵ Plätschke, *Die Tschetschenen*, p. vii.

⁸⁶ R. Kherumian, "Contribution à l'Anthropologie du Caucase," *L'Anthropologie*, LII (1943), No. 1—2, p. 44.

⁸⁷ Nansen, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Ladyženskij, FT, p. 200.

868 and to be alert. The boys are encouraged to develop into great warriors and robbers. If the boy's father or one of his brothers was killed by an enemy, the boy is constantly admonished of his sacred duty of blood-vengeance.⁹⁰

[579] Yes, boys are taught to become great robbers and raiders. Robbery and [577] raiding are looked upon by the North Caucasians not only as a licit occupation (as long as the victim is a stranger), but a very honourable one. Robbery is a virtue, a national virtue, and forms one of the most important subjects of the curriculum of the Caucasian school-boy.⁹¹ Robbers of Ossetia even have a patron-saint, St. George himself (*Sau-baredzi Džuar*, i. e., "The Saint of the Black Horseman"), whose favour must be implored, for success or failure in a raid depends entirely on him. Crime is glorified.⁹² Baddeley gives us an example of how a victim once forgave a thief out of mere admiration for the skill with which the theft was committed.⁹³ To rob without being caught is the greatest glory of the Cherkess.⁹⁴ Among the Abadzekhs the best robber is always chosen as leader.⁹⁵ It was only in recent times that the People's Court in the district of Adighé began to condemn natives for a crime which till then had been considered a virtue—to steal from another village.⁹⁶ The Chechen children are actually drilled in stealing. When a Chechen boy is allowed to bear arms for the first time, his father pronounces the solemn words, "May they serve you on the right and wrong paths, in theft and war."⁹⁷ The ambition of the young Georgian mountaineer is none other than to become a famous robber.⁹⁸ In short, everywhere in the mountains, the boy must be taught and trained to become great, and greatness consists in raids, robbery, theft, and vengeance.⁹⁹ Of course, there is a great difference between the Caucasian robbers of today and those of half a century ago. The Cherkess, for example, are no longer so notorious as they were several decades ago. Today they are generally peaceful agriculturalists and cattle breeders.¹⁰⁰

Girls are brought up by the mother, from whom they learn to cook, make clothes, embroider, work out in the field, etc.¹⁰¹

⁹⁰ Klaproth, *Beschreibung der russischen Provinzen zwischen dem Kaspischen und Schwarzen Meer*, p. 120. What Klaproth says of the Lesghians held good for all mountaineers.

⁹¹ Potocki, *op. cit.*, p. 153: "... dans tout le Caucase le brigandage était en honneur." See also: Ellis, *Memoir of a Map, etc.*, p. 20; Essad-Bey, *op. cit.*, p. 194; Dubrovin, *Istorijsa*, I, i, p. 442, ii, p. 364.

⁹² Baddeley, *op. cit.*, I, p. 24.

⁹³ Baddeley, *op. cit.*, II, p. 114.

⁹⁴ Dubois de Montpéroux, *Voyage autour du Caucase*, I, p. 131.

⁹⁵ Pallas, *Bemerkungen auf einer Reise in d. süd. Statth. d. russ. Reichs, etc.*, I, p. 369.

⁹⁶ Ladyženskij, FT, p. 194.

⁹⁷ Essad-Bey, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

⁹⁸ Essad-Bey, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

⁹⁹ This reminds us of what Caesar had to say of the Germans, *De Bello Gallico*, vi, 23: "They do not regard it as infamous to rob others, provided that the robbery is committed outside their own land, but they actually encourage their youth to such acts, both to give them practice and to keep them busy."

¹⁰⁰ Ladyženskij, FT, p. 200.

¹⁰¹ Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

In our exposition of the various marriage impediments we have also described the institution called *atalyk* (*supra*, p. 57). The upper classes especially used to give their children over to foster-parents whose task it was to teach them all these things. 868

§ 8. PARENTAL OBLIGATION OF SUPPORTING THEIR CHILDREN

In patrilineal societies in which the perpetuation of the family is the greatest obligation of the individual and of the family as a whole, there is no danger that the boy will suffer any bodily need, food, clothing, shelter, unless absolutely unavoidable. But even girls are well taken care of. Even before Islamic law gave the Caucasian woman a right to a small part of the inheritance, which the *adults* excluded, female members of the family were always well provided for. After the death of the father, his obligation passed on to the oldest brother till all the sisters were married.¹⁰² If the girl happens not to have any brothers, the obligation of support passes on to the nephews,¹⁰³ or to other relatives. 955

§ 9. PARENTAL AFFECTION FOR OFFSPRING

Much has been written about the lack of affection of North Caucasian parents for their children. In most cases, however, the authors fail to grasp the real psychology behind what seems extreme coldness and lack of parental affection. Reineggs, for example, who has given us one of the first reliable accounts of Caucasian customs, is not free from this very misunderstanding. He writes: "Er pflanzt sich tierisch fort, ohne Liebe zu kennen; er betrachtet sein Weib und seine Kinder als einen Teil seines Vermögens; er zählt sie zu seinen Herden, und bleibt, da er nur für körperliches Gefühl reizbar ist, gegen sittliche, empfundene Erfahrungen, gefällige Gunstbezeugungen ungerührt und in gleichgültiger Zufriedenheit."¹⁰⁴ In other words, Reineggs failed to distinguish between loving someone and manifesting this love *externally and publicly*. 853 593

The NORTHWESTERN CAUCASIANS. Longworth, speaking about the Cherkess of about a century ago, made this very distinction. He says that the father "is forbidden the slightest manifestation of tenderness" not only for his wife but also his children.¹⁰⁵ He does not deny the existence of tenderness but only its exteriorization and manifestation.

The NORTHEASTERN CAUCASIANS. Grabovskij mentions that an Ingush not only considers it a disgrace to carry his child in his arms or to fondle it but that he is forbidden even to mention its name before others.¹⁰⁶ Baddeley gives us a very fine example of how really degrading the Lesghians consider it to take their own children in their arms. "A fellow villager, Boulat-khan, had brought on himself the contempt of the men of Andee by publicly carrying his little son in his arms, a manifestation of affection so indelicate in native eyes as to imply

¹⁰² Leontovič, II, p. 246, § 107; II, p. 97. Berke, Čečnja i Čečency, p. 97.

¹⁰³ Leontovič, II, p. 177, § 178 (in regard to the Ingushi).

¹⁰⁴ Reineggs, *Allgemeine hist.-topograph. Beschreibung des Kaukasus*, Vorrede, p. viii.

¹⁰⁵ *A Year among the Circassians*, I, p. 285.

¹⁰⁶ "Inguli, ich žizn i obyčaj," SSKG, IX (1876), p. 49.